NOSFERATU

a symphony of shadows • a symphony of shudders

ISSUE 2

CALIBER COMICS

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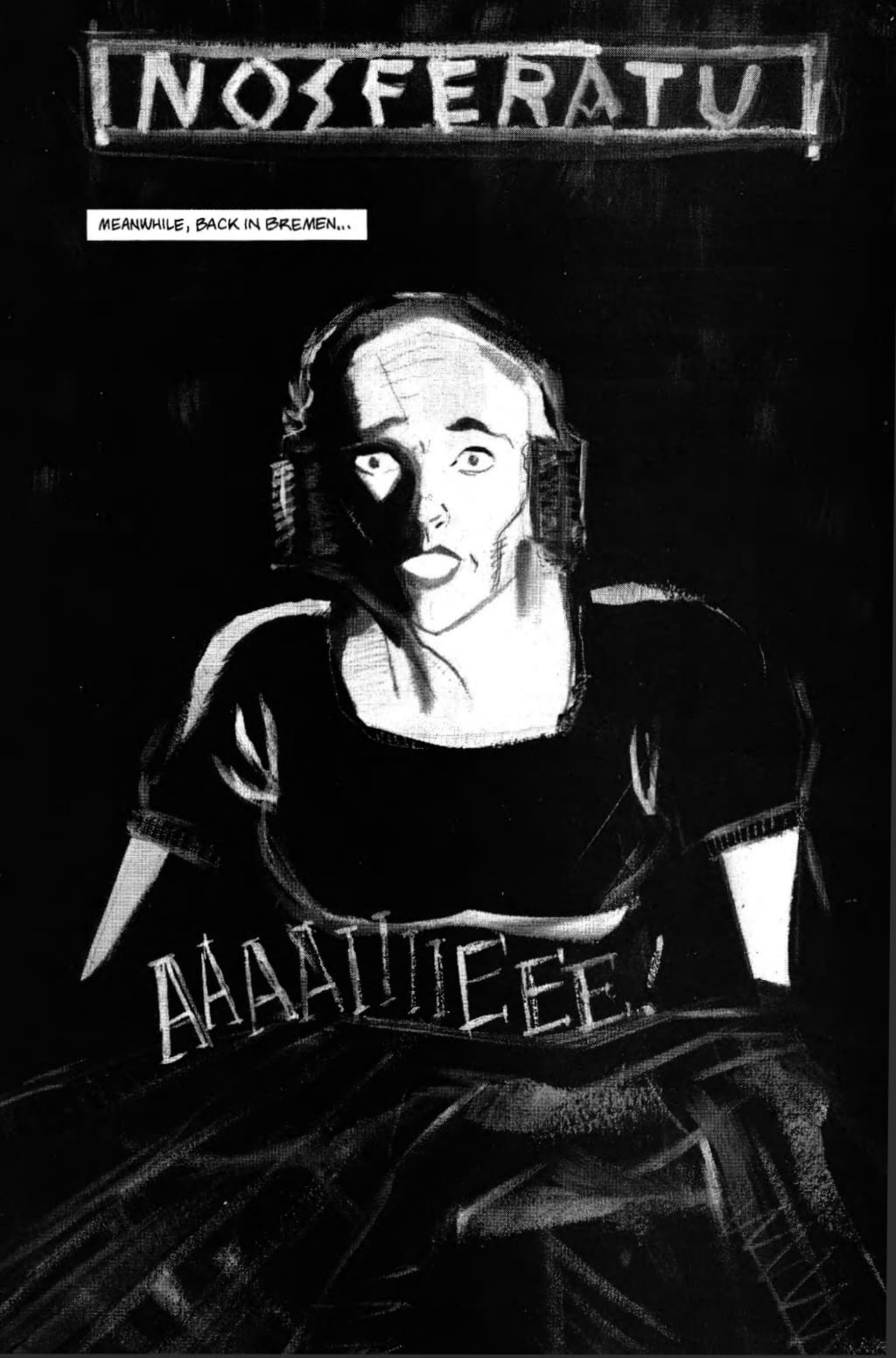
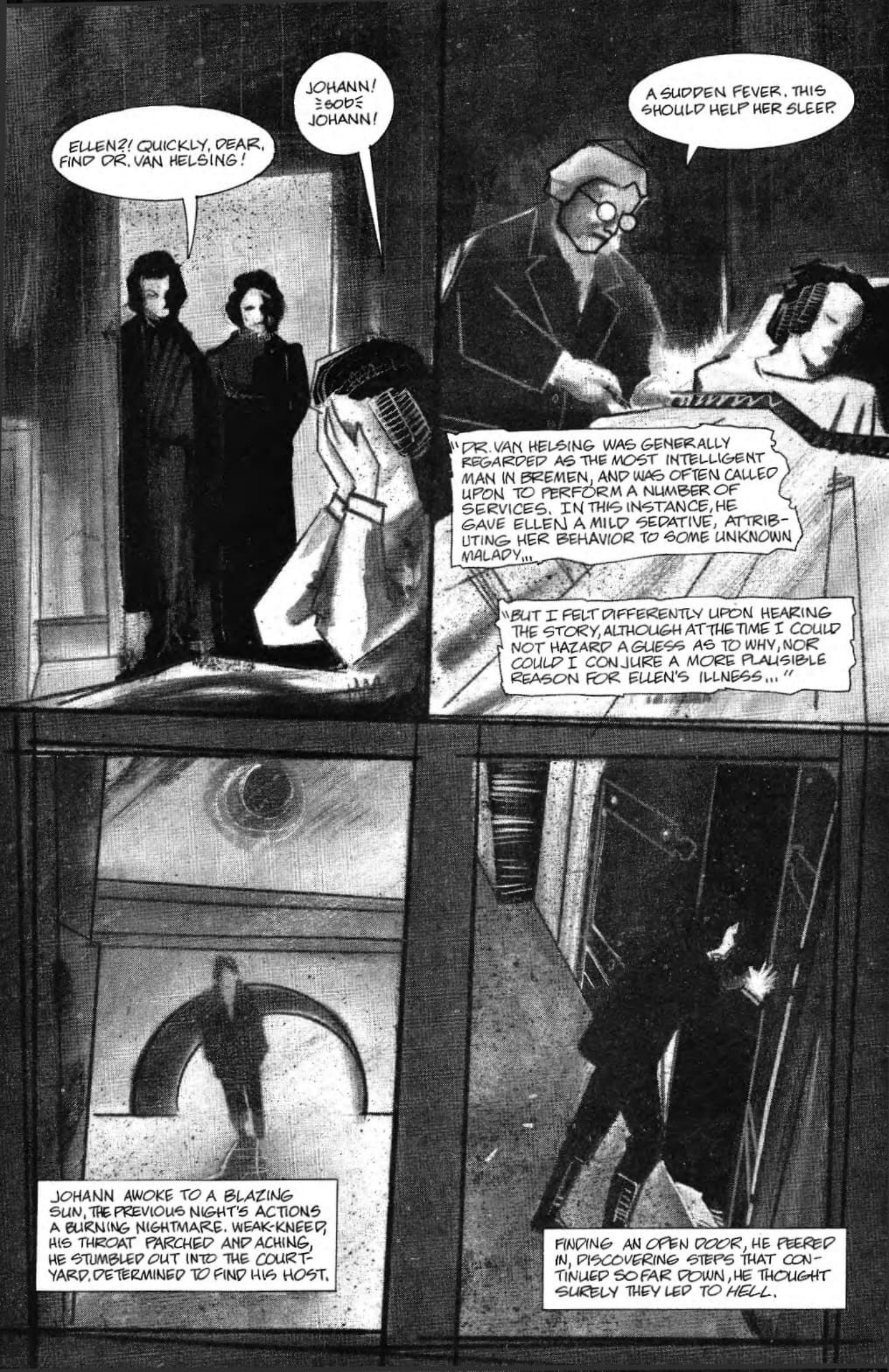

NOSFERATU
MEANWHILE, BACK IN BREMEN...
AAAAUUEEE!


ELLEN?! QUICKLY, DEAR, FIND DR. VAN HELSING!
JOHANN! ≡SOB≡ JOHANN!
A SUDDEN FEVER. THIS SHOULD HELP HER SLEEP.
"DR. VAN HELSING WAS GENERALLY REGARDED AS THE MOST INTELLIGENT MAN IN BREMEN, AND WAS OFTEN CALLED UPON TO PERFORM A NUMBER OF SERVICES. IN THIS INSTANCE, HE GAVE ELLEN A MILD SEDATIVE, ATTRIBUTING HER BEHAVIOR TO SOME UNKNOWN MALADY...
"BUT I FELT DIFFERENTLY UPON HEARING THE STORY, ALTHOUGH AT THE TIME I COULD NOT HAZARD A GUESS AS TO WHY, NOR COULD I CONJURE A MORE PLAUSIBLE REASON FOR ELLEN'S ILLNESS..."
JOHANN AWOKE TO A BLAZING SUN, THE PREVIOUS NIGHT'S ACTIONS A BURNING NIGHTMARE. WEAK-KNEED, HIS THROAT PARCHED AND ACHING, HE STUMBLED OUT INTO THE COURTYARD, DETERMINED TO FIND HIS HOST.
FINDING AN OPEN DOOR, HE PEERED IN, DISCOVERING STEPS THAT CONTINUED SO FAR DOWN, HE THOUGHT SURELY THEY LED TO HELL.

LATER, BY PREVIOUS ARRANGEMENT, THE COFFINS ARE LOADED ON TO THE FREIGHTER SHIP EMPUSA, BOUND FOR VARIOUS PORTS. AND IF ANY OF THE CREW ARE DISTURBED BY THE SIGHT OF COFFINS ON THE BACK OF A DRIVERLESS COACH, NOTHING IS SAID.
BUT, AS THE NIGHT TURNS TO PITCH, WHO COULD BLAME ANY MAN FOR QUICKENING HIS PACE, EAGER TO SET SAIL FROM THIS GODFORSAKEN PLACE?

WITH THE COMING OF NIGHT CAME INCREASED ACTIVITY...
HOW HE FOUND HIS WAY BACK TO HIS ROOMS WAS A MYSTERY TO JOHANN, AS WAS THE LENGTH OF TIME HE SPENT IN TRANCE-LIKE SLUMBER. BUT WHEN HE AWOKE, HIS DOOR HAD BEEN LOCKED FROM THE OUTSIDE, AND NIGHT HAD FALLEN. AND THIS MONSTER -- THIS NOSFERATU -- WAS HARD AT WORK.
THE MONSTER -- FOR SURELY THAT IS WHAT HE WAS, THOUGHT JOHANN -- THE MONSTER WAS PREPARING FOR A JOURNEY. IT STACKED A NUMBER OF ITS INFERNAL BEDS ONTO A COACH, THE LAST OF WHICH REMAINED OPEN AND LINED WITH SOIL.
IT SEEMED TO JOHANN THE MONSTER HAD NO WAY WITH WHICH TO ENCLOSE ITSELF, SO FAR WAS IT FROM THE COFFIN LID.
BEFORE HIS DISBELIEVING EYES, JOHANN WITNESSED THE LID, AS IF GUIDED BY UNSEEN HANDS, RISE UP BY IT'S OWN VOLITION!

HAVING FOUND A METHOD OF ESCAPE, JOHANN BOLTED FROM COUNT ORLAC'S CHATEAU, FILLED WITH FEAR, YET DRIVEN BY SOMETHING MORE.
FOR HE KNEW WHERE THE MONSTER WAS BOUND... TO BREMEN... TO ELLEN...

"WHAT STRANGE OCCURENCES HAD TRANSPIRED IN OUR LITTLE TOWN...

ASYLUM FOR THE INSANE

"SINCE JOHANN'S DEPARTURE, IT SEEMED ALMOST AS IF BREMEN HAD LOST SOME OF ITS REASON."

"NOT THE LEAST OF THESE ODDITIES WAS THE STRANGE CASE OF HERR KNOCK, JOHANN'S EMPLOYER, WHO, OF A SUDDEN, BECAME QUITE MAD."

"WITH NO RECOURSE BUT TO COMMIT HIM, STILL THE DOCTORS WERE TAKEN ABACK BY THE INTENSITY OF KNOCK'S INSANITY. PARTICULARLY WORRISOME WAS THE REALTY AGENTS DIET OF FLIES AND SPIDERS, AND HIS CONSTANT DEMAND FOR"

BLOOD! BLOOOOOD!

JOHANN SPED ACROSS THE COUNTRYSIDE, WITHOUT REST OR FOOD, PAUSING ONLY LONG ENOUGH TO CHANGE HORSES, HIS THOUGHTS ON ONE THING; REACHING BREMEN BEFORE THE MONSTER.
"WITH ALL HIS INTERESTS, DR. VAN HELSING FOUND LITTLE TIME TO INQUIRE AFTER THE HEALTH OF ELLEN. HIS LECTURES OFTEN KEPT HIM OCCUPIED."
OBSERVE, GENTLEMEN, HOW THIS SPECIES OF PLANT, THE VENUS FLYTRAP, CARRIES THE SAME CARNIVOROUS TRAITS AS MOST MAMMALS...
"NOR COULD VAN HELSING SHED ANY LIGHT ON ON HERR KNOCK'S MALADY. THE MADMAN'S DOCTOR ORDERED HIM BOUND, SO AS NOT TO RISK ANY STRAYING FROM HIS PRESCRIBED DIET."
"BUT POOR ELLEN HAD NOT THE RIDDLE OF SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY NOR THE CLEAR LOGIC OF INSANITY TO DISTRACT HER THOUGHTS. HER LISTLESSNESS AND FITFUL SLEEP CAME FROM HER CONCERN FOR JOHANN. OR SO WE ALL THOUGHT."

" OFTEN, ELLEN COULD BE SEEN ALONE IN THE DUNES, SCANNING THE HORIZON, WAITING FOR JOHANN'S RETURN. OH, HOW MY HEART BROKE FOR HER...
"ALWAYS A LOVELY GIRL, ELLEN'S SICKNESS PROPELLED HER INTO A RARER BEAUTY, HAUNTING AND ETHEREAL."
ELLEN? THIS JUST ARRIVED... IT'S FROM JOHANN...
"WE'D HOPED THAT THE NOTE FROM JOHANN WOULD LIFT HER SPIRITS..."
"INSTEAD, HIS WORDS ONLY MADE HER SADDER."

MYSTERIOUS PLAGUE
BAFFLES SCIENCE
HE COMES.
MUNCH! MUNCH!

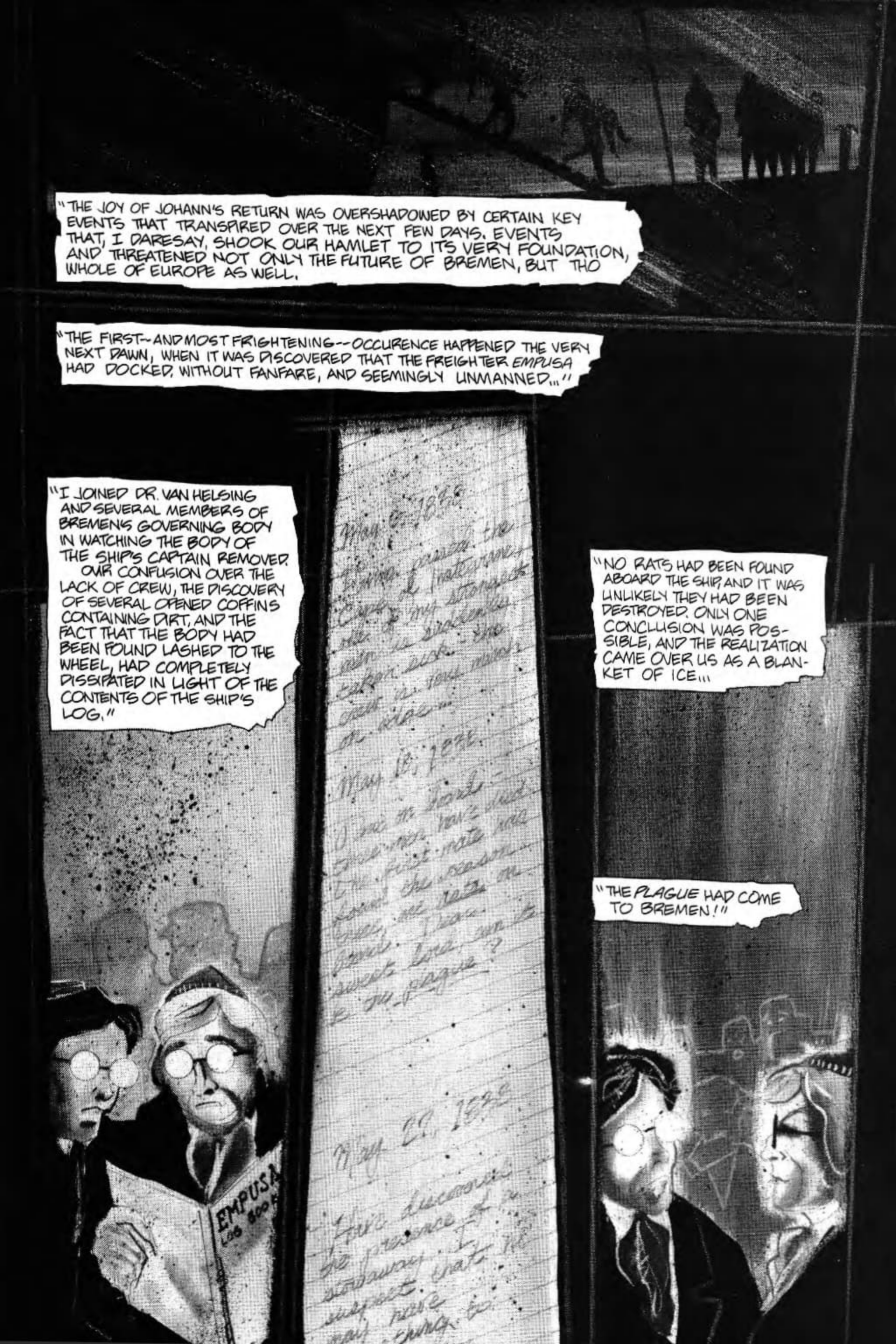
IN SPITE OF ALL OBSTACLES, JOHANN HUTTER RODE ON TOWARDS BREMEN, WITHOUT HALT, PUSHED FORWARD BY THE BREATH OF THE NOSFERATU.
HOLD, SIR! HOLD, I SAY!
WHAT THE DEVIL DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?!
MY HORSE IS DOWN, AND I MUST REACH BREMEN. I NEED YOUR HORSE.
THE HELL YOU SAY! BACK AWAY, FOOL, OR SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCES!!
I NEED YOUR HORSE!
NOTHING WOULD STOP HIM. NOTHING.

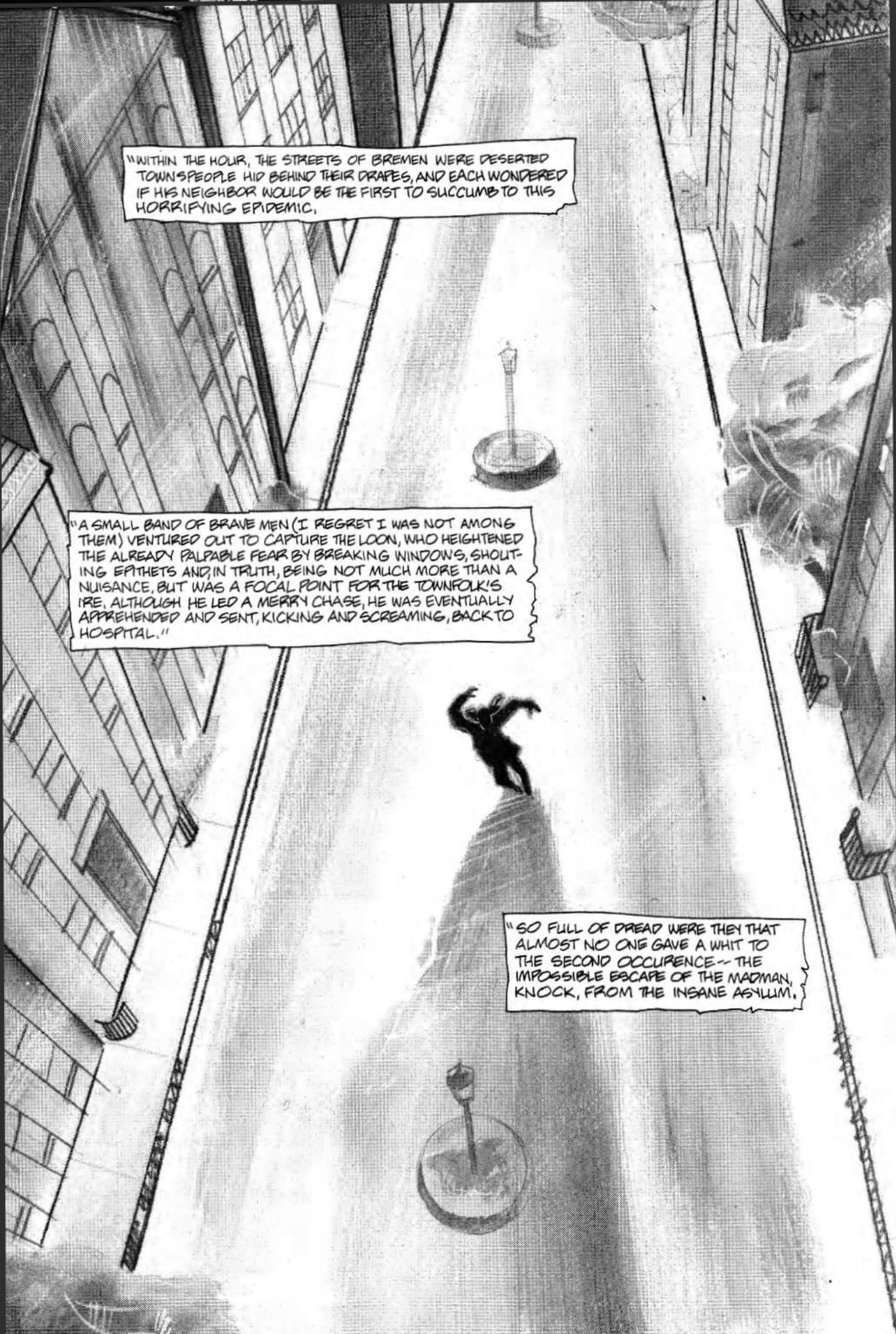
ELLEN?
ELLEN, PLEASE COME BACK TO BED. IT'S VERY LATE.
HE'S COMING, ANNIE.
WHO COMES? JOHANN? IS IT JOHANN, DEAR?
I MUST GO TO MEET HIM.
ELLEN, WAIT! WHO IS COMING?! ELLEN!

Lampusa

HE'S HERE...
JOHANN!!
DARLING, I WAS SO FRIGHTENED!
ELLEN, ELLEN MY LOVE!
"AS WE WERE TO DISCOVER LATER, JOHANN'S ARRIVAL WAS A MIXED BLESSING, INDEED."

HE'S HERE! THE MASTER HAS ARRIVED!
HAS IT COME? AM I ARRIVED IN TIME? WE HAVE TO STOP THE EVIL, ELLEN!
HE IS NEARBY. I FEEL HIM. WHAT CAN WE DO, JOHANN? WHAT CAN WE DO?


"THE JOY OF JOHANN'S RETURN WAS OVERSHADOWED BY CERTAIN KEY EVENTS THAT TRANSPIRED OVER THE NEXT FEW DAYS. EVENTS THAT, I DARESAY, SHOOK OUR HAMLET TO ITS VERY FOUNDATION, AND THREATENED NOT ONLY THE FUTURE OF BREMEN, BUT THE WHOLE OF EUROPE AS WELL.
"THE FIRST--AND MOST FRIGHTENING--OCCURENCE HAPPENED THE VERY NEXT DAWN, WHEN IT WAS DISCOVERED THAT THE FREIGHTER EMPUSA HAD DOCKED, WITHOUT FANFARE, AND SEEMINGLY UNMANNED..."
"I JOINED DR. VAN HELSING AND SEVERAL MEMBERS OF BREMEN'S GOVERNING BODY IN WATCHING THE BODY OF THE SHIP'S CAPTAIN REMOVED. OUR CONFUSION OVER THE LACK OF CREW, THE DISCOVERY OF SEVERAL OPENED COFFINS CONTAINING DIRT, AND THE FACT THAT THE BODY HAD BEEN FOUND LASHED TO THE WHEEL, HAD COMPLETELY DISSIPATED IN LIGHT OF THE CONTENTS OF THE SHIP'S LOG."
EMPUSA
"NO RATS HAD BEEN FOUND ABOARD THE SHIP, AND IT WAS UNLIKELY THEY HAD BEEN DESTROYED. ONLY ONE CONCLUSION WAS POSSIBLE, AND THE REALIZATION CAME OVER US AS A BLANKET OF ICE..."
"THE PLAGUE HAD COME TO BREMEN!"


"WITHIN THE HOUR, THE STREETS OF BREMEN WERE DESERTED TOWNSPEOPLE HID BEHIND THEIR DRAPES, AND EACH WONDERED IF HIS NEIGHBOR WOULD BE THE FIRST TO SUCCUMB TO THIS HORRIFYING EPIDEMIC.
"A SMALL BAND OF BRAVE MEN (I REGRET I WAS NOT AMONG THEM) VENTURED OUT TO CAPTURE THE LOON, WHO HEIGHTENED THE ALREADY PALPABLE FEAR BY BREAKING WINDOWS, SHOUTING EPITHETS AND, IN TRUTH, BEING NOT MUCH MORE THAN A NUISANCE. BUT WAS A FOCAL POINT FOR THE TOWNFOLK'S IRE. ALTHOUGH HE LED A MERRY CHASE, HE WAS EVENTUALLY APPREHENDED AND SENT, KICKING AND SCREAMING, BACK TO HOSPITAL."
"SO FULL OF DREAD WERE THEY THAT ALMOST NO ONE GAVE A WHIT TO THE SECOND OCCURENCE -- THE IMPOSSIBLE ESCAPE OF THE MADMAN, KNOCK, FROM THE INSANE ASYLUM.

"THE THIRD OCCURENCE WAS THE MOST DAMNING; THAT OF JOHANN AND ELLEN.
"I SAW VERY LITTLE OF THEM DURING BREMEN'S BLEAK PERIOD, HAVING SECLUDED MYSELF IN MY ROOMS, AND VENTURING OUT ONLY INFREQUENTLY. BUT I RECEIVED WORD FROM VAN HELSING AS TO THEIR CONDITION, HE HAVING NO RESERVATIONS ABOUT BRAVING THE OUTDOORS. TOGETHER WE AGREED THAT SOMETHING WAS, INDEED, AMISS..."
"JOHANN'S RETURN FROM HIS TRIP LEFT HIM WEAK AND ANEMIC. HE WAS BEDRIDDEN MOST TIMES. MEANWHILE, ELLEN SEEMED TO GROW STRONGER BY THE HOUR, BUT HER HUMOR WAS GRIM, INDEED. HER EYES HAD THE CAST OF SOMEONE WHO HAS GAINED NEW RESOLVE AND PURPOSE..."
'ONLY A WOMAN IS ABLE TO BREAK THE TERRIBLE SPELL--A WOMAN PURE IN HEART MUST OFFER HERSELF TO NOSFERATU.'... OH, JOHANN, WHAT WILL BECOME OF US?
ELLEN? I FORBADE YOU TO READ THE INFERNAL BOOK. ONCE I'M WELL, I WILL SP--
WHAT DO YOU LOOK AT? YOU'RE FOREVER AT THE WINDOW. WHAT IS IT, LOVE?
THE TIME DRAWS NEARER, MY LOVE. WILL ANYONE TRUST OUR TALE, OR MUST WE FEND FOR OURSELVES? WHATEVER, A RECKONING COMES.
DO YOU SEE IT, OUT THERE ACROSS THE WAY? EACH NIGHT I SIT AND STARE AT IT...
"...THE FACE OF OUR TORMENTOR..."

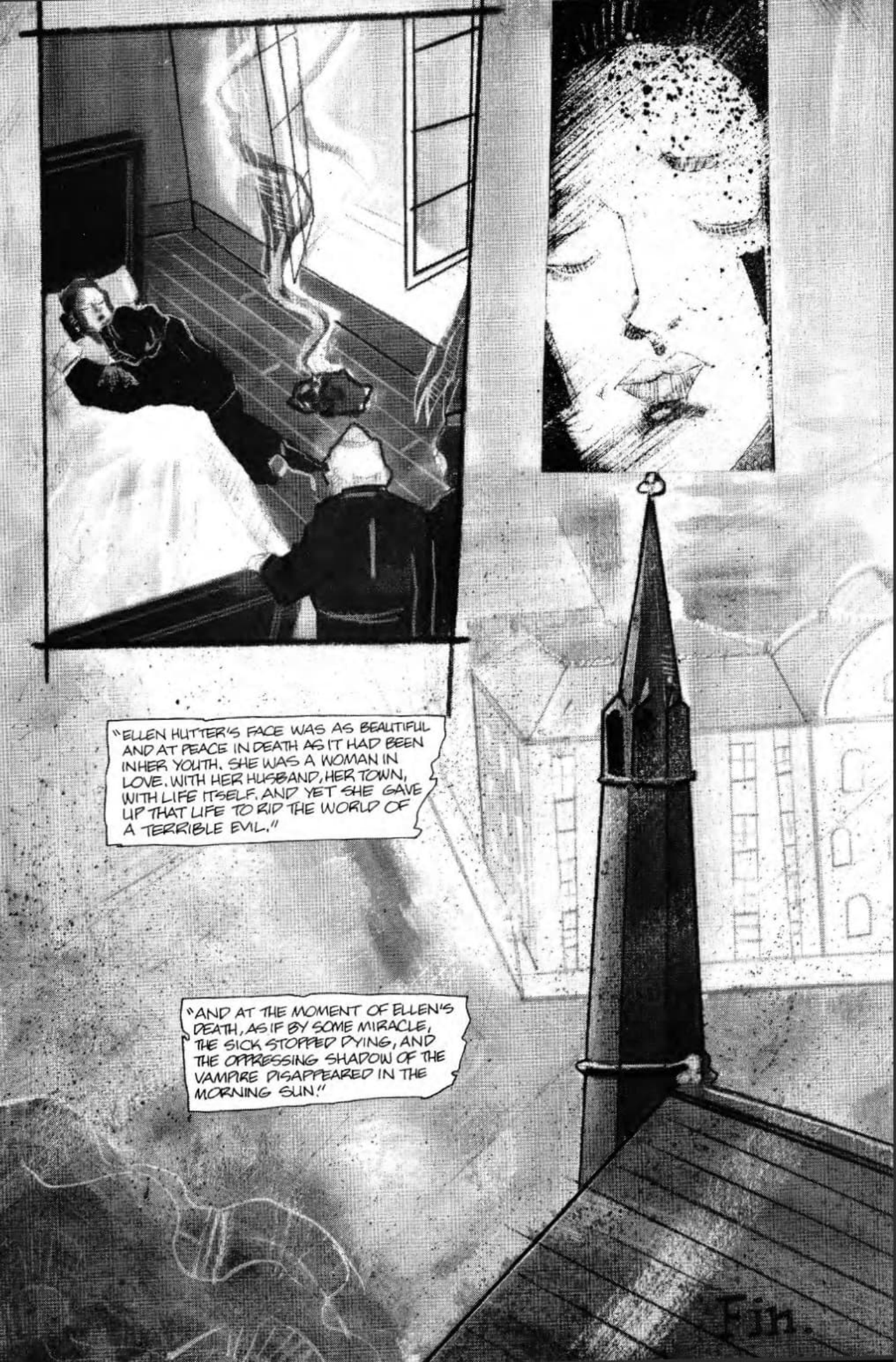
ATTENTION! BECAUSE OF THE RAPID SPREAD OF THE PLAGUE, THE MAYOR HAS DECREED THAT NO MORE SICK CAN BE BROUGHT TO THE HOSPITAL!
IT'LL NOT HAVE YOU! NOT WHILE I LIVE!!
BY ALL THAT'S HOLY, IT'LL NOT HAVE YOU.
I'VE SPOKEN TO VAN HELSING AND HERR CAVALLIUS. TOMORROW WE SEARCH FOR THE MONSTER'S LAIR. THERE MUST BE SOME WAY TO DESTROY IT! BUT I SWEAR TO YOU...
IT'S ME HE WANTS, JOHANN.
ONLY A WOMAN CAN BREAK THE SPELL. ONLY A WOMAN

"ALTHOUGH I FOUND HUTTER'S STORY UNBELIEVABLE, A PRODUCT OF HIS FEVERED IMAGININGS, MY COLLEAGUE VAN HELSING-- AFTER EXAMINING JOHANN AND QUESTIONING HIM AT LENGTH-- DEEMED THE YOUNG MAN'S STORY WORTH EXPLORING FURTHER."
"WE AGREED TO MEET THE FOLLOWING MORNING, TO SEEK OUT THIS 'VAMPIRE', THIS 'NOSFERATU'. BUT FATE INTERVENED, IN THE FORM OF A HEADACHE, AND OUR PLAN UNRAVELED AS QUICKLY AS IT WAS WOVEN."
PLEASE, JOHANN. I'M SURE IT'S =uhn= NOTHING.
I'LL HEAR NO MORE ABOUT IT. YOU'RE ILL AND NEED MEDICAL ATTENTION. I'M OFF TO FIND DR. VAN HELSING.
I'M NOT AFRAID OF THE DARK--OR WHATEVER WAITS WITHIN IT...
I'M SURE THE DOCTOR CAN FIND THE CAUSE-- AND CURE--FOR YOUR HEADACHE.
HURRY BACK, MY LOVE, AND BE CAREFUL!

THE TOWNSPEOPLE LIVED IN TERROR. THE SICK COULD NO LONGER BE DISTINGUISHED FROM THE DYING. THE SIGHT OF ONE MAN RACING ALONG GENERATED NO RESPONSE. BUT JOHANN, EAGER TO FIND HELP FOR ELLEN, FELT A CHARGE IN THE AIR. A CRACKLE OF FEAR.
HERE I AM, YOU FIEND. ALONE AND UNPROTECTED. NOW IS THE TIME.

"VAN HELSING AND I WERE DISCUSSING THE ALMOST ELECTRIC CHARGE IN THE AIR, THE FEELING THAT EVENTS WERE SOON TO CRASH TOGETHER, WHEN--"
DOCTOR! COME QUICKLY, ELLEN'S TAKEN ILL!
TAKEN ILL? BUT I JUST CHECKED ON HER THE OTHER-- MY LORD!
"IT STRUCK US THEN. ALL OF US. ELLEN WAS NOT ILL. SHE WAS THE STRONGEST ONE OF ALL."
"WE'D SEEN THE BOOK, OF COURSE, THE ONE JOHANN BROUGHT BACK FROM TRANSYLVANIA. I MYSELF GAVE IT A CURSORY READ. ONE PASSAGE IN PARTICULAR INTRIGUED ME."
"I THOUGHT IT AN AMUSING SUPERSTITION AT THE TIME, BUT NOW, RACING BACK TO HUTTER'S APARTMENT, I FOUND IT NOT AMUSING AT ALL, BUT THE MOST TERRIFYING WORDS I'VE EVER READ."
ONLY A WOMAN IS ABLE TO BREAK THE TERRIBLE SPELL-- A WOMAN PURE IN HEART MUST OFFER HERSELF TO NOSFERATU.

THE WOMAN MUST REMAIN AT THE SIDE OF NOSFERATU UNTIL THE CROW OF THE ROOSTER HERALDS THE BREAK OF DAY.
ELLEN!


"ELLEN HUTTER'S FACE WAS AS BEAUTIFUL AND AT PEACE IN DEATH AS IT HAD BEEN IN HER YOUTH. SHE WAS A WOMAN IN LOVE. WITH HER HUSBAND, HER TOWN, WITH LIFE ITSELF. AND YET SHE GAVE UP THAT LIFE TO RID THE WORLD OF A TERRIBLE EVIL."
"AND AT THE MOMENT OF ELLEN'S DEATH, AS IF BY SOME MIRACLE, THE SICK STOPPED DYING, AND THE OPPRESSING SHADOW OF THE VAMPIRE DISAPPEARED IN THE MORNING SUN."
Fin.

HALLWACHS 90